

BEGINNINGS

CHAPTER 2

4:13 These are the limits set up by Allah. Those who obey Allah and His Messenger will be led into the Gardens watered by flowing rivers to live forever. This is the ultimate reward!

At age 40 Mohammed said he had his first vision of the angel Gabriel. Mohammed told his revelations to his family and friends. Some joined with him in Islam (submission).

There would be a Day of Judgment and those who did not worship according to Mohammed's revelations would live in Hell.

Mohammed's attacks on the religions of Mecca caused animosity. His opponents were promised torture for eternity. More arguments with Meccans followed. But many Arabs were attracted to Islam as well.

CHILDHOOD

1115¹ When Mohammed was eight years old, his grandfather died. He was then taken in by Abu Talib, his uncle. His uncle took him on a trading trip to Syria, which was a very different place from Mecca. Syria was a sophisticated country that was Christian and very much a part of the cosmopolitan culture of the Mediterranean. It was Syrian Christians who gave the Arabs their alphabet. When Mohammed was a child there were no books written in Arabic.

MARRIAGE

1120 Mohammed was grown when he was hired by the wealthy widow and a distant cousin Khadija to act as her agent in trading with Syria. Mohammed had a reputation of good character and good business sense. Trading from Mecca to Syria was risky business because it took skill to manage a caravan and then to make the best deal in Syria. He managed Khadija's affairs well, and she returned a good profit on the trading.

1. The number is the reference to Ishaq's *Sira Rasul Allah*, the Sira, margin note 115.

1120 Sometime after hiring Mohammed as her business agent, Khadija proposed marriage to him. They married and had six children. Their two sons died in childhood, and the four daughters lived to adulthood.

MONOTHEISM IN ARABIA

1144 After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans the Jews dispersed throughout the Middle East, so there was a strong presence of Jews in Arabia. There were a few Christians who were local Arabs, in fact, Mohammed's wife had a cousin who was a Christian. But the type of Christianity in the area of Mecca was unorthodox with a Trinity of God, Jesus and Mary.

1144 Jews and Christians were called the People of the Book. Since there was no book yet published in Arabic, this distinction was a strong one. The sources of the Arabic religions were found in oral tradition and custom. The Meccans were aware of the Jewish Abrahamic myths.

THE PROPHET

1150 Mohammed would take month long retreats to be alone and do the Quraysh religious practices. After the retreat he would go and circumambulate (circle and pray) at the Kabah. The Kabah was a square stone structure that had been a center for pilgrimage for centuries.

1152 At the age of forty Mohammed began to have visions and hear voices. His visions were first shown to him as bright as daybreak during his sleep in the month of Ramadan. Mohammed said that the angel, Gabriel, came to him with a brocade with writing on it and commanded him to read. The angel said:

96:1 *Recite: In the name of your Lord, Who created man from clots of blood.*

96:3 *Recite: Your Lord is the most generous, Who taught the use of the pen and taught man what he did not know.*

T1150 Mohammed awoke from his sleep. Now Mohammed hated ecstatic poets and the insane. His thoughts were that he was now either a poet or insane, that which he hated. He thought to kill himself by jumping off a cliff. And off he went to do just that. Half way up the hill, he heard, "Mohammed, You are the apostle of Allah and I am Gabriel." He gazed at the angel and no matter which way he turned his head the vision followed his eyes. Mohammed stood there for a long time.

BEGINNINGS

1156 Mohammed's wife, Khadija, was the first convert. From the first she had encouraged him, believed him. She knew him to be of good character and did not think him to be deceived or crazy.

PRAYER

1157 Mohammed began to do his prayers with his new understanding. At first he did two prostrations with each prayer. Later he understood that he should use four prostrations per prayer and use two prostrations when he was traveling.

1158 Then when he was on a mountain he saw a vision in which Gabriel showed him how to do ritual ablutions as a purification ritual before prayer. He went home and showed his wife, Khadija, how he now understood the prayer rituals to be done and she copied him.

The following seven verses are used as a prayer, five times a day:

1:1 *In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.*

1:2 *Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds. The Compassionate, the Merciful. King of the Judgment Day.*

1:5 *Only You do we worship, and to You alone do we ask for help. Keep us on the straight and narrow path. The path of those that You favor; not the path of those who anger You [the Jews] nor the path of those who go astray [the Christians].*

PREACHING

One of the many gods in Mecca was Allah, a moon god. The native religions did not have any formal structure for the many deities, but Allah was a high god. Allah was the primary god of the Quraysh tribe of Mohammed, and Mohammed's father was named Abdullah, slave of Allah.

Mohammed preached the doctrine of the Day of Judgment. The Koran:

83:10 *Woe on that day [Judgment day] to those who deny Our signs, who regard the Judgment Day as a lie! No one regards it as a lie except the transgressor or the criminal, who, when Our signs are recited to him, says, "Old wives tales!" No! Their habits have become like rust on their hearts. Yes, they will be veiled from their Lord's light that day. Then they will be burned in Hell. They will be told, "This is what you called a lie."*

After the Day of Doom would come Paradise and Hell.

52:7 *Truly, a punishment from your Lord is coming, and no one can stop it. That day heaven will heave from side to side, and the mountains will*

shake to pieces. Woe on that day to those who called the messengers liars, who wasted their time in vain disputes.

52:13 *On that day they will be thrown into the Fire of Hell. This is the Fire that you treated like a lie. What! Do you think that this is magic? Or, do you not see it? Burn there! Bear it patiently, or impatiently. It will all be the same to you, because you will certainly get what you deserve.*

52:17 *But those who have feared Allah will live pleasantly amid Gardens, rejoicing in what their Lord has given them, and what their Lord has protected them from, saying, "Eat and drink in health as a reward for your good deeds." They will recline on arranged couches, and We will marry them to dark-eyed houris [beautiful companions of pleasure].*

1161 Any person who rejected the revelations of Mohammed would be eternally punished. The culture of religious tolerance in Mecca now had a new religion which preached the end of tolerance. Only Islam was acceptable.

1166 Mohammed began to openly preach his new doctrine. He had been private for three years before he went public.

The Arabs had always believed in jinns, invisible beings created from fire. Now they appeared in the Koran.

51:56 *I created jinn [creatures made from fire] and man only to worship me. I need no livelihood from them, and I do not need them to feed me. Truly, Allah is the sole sustainer, the possessor of power, and the unmovable!*

1166 The Muslims went to the edge of Mecca to pray in order to be alone. One day a group of the Quraysh came upon them and began to mock them and a fight started. Saed, a Muslim, picked up the jaw bone of a camel, struck one of the Quraysh with it, and bloodied him. This violence was the first blood to be shed in Islam.

1167 When Mohammed spoke about his new religion, it did not cause any problems among the Meccans. Then Mohammed began to condemn their religion, rituals, and worship. The Meccans took offense and resolved to treat him as an enemy. Luckily, he had the protection of his influential uncle, Abu Talib.

1170 Things got much worse. Now there was open hostility in the town. Quarrels increased, arguments got very heated. Complete disharmony dominated the town. The tribe started to abuse the recently converted Muslims. But Mohammed's uncle Abu Talib was a respected elder and was able to protect them from real harm.

This is the Sunna of Mohammed

PUBLIC TEACHING

CHAPTER 3

3:32 Say: Obey Allah and His messenger, but if they reject it, then truly, Allah does not love those who reject the faith.

SUMMARY

As Mohammed continued to preach Islam, more arguments happened. The only true religion was Islam. Mohammed's opponents were doomed to Hell.

The leaders tried to prove Mohammed wrong with arguments and demands for heavenly proof. Mohammed continued to argue that the Koran was the only proof of his divine mission that was needed.

The Koran continued in its insistence that Mohammed was the prophet of Allah. All the resistance to the words of Mohammed was evil.

The Meccans arguments continued. They asked why the Koran was not delivered in a complete form? The Koran condemns those who argue with Mohammed:

25:32 Those who disbelieve say, "Why wasn't the Koran revealed to him all at once?" It was revealed one part at a time so that We might strengthen your heart with it and so that We might rehearse it with you gradually, in slow, well-arranged stages.

25:33 They will not come to you with any difficult questions for which We have not provided you the true and best answers. Those who will be gathered together face down in Hell will have the worst place and will be the farthest away from the right path.

The Meccans had many leaders who resisted Mohammed.

38:55 But the evil have a terrible place waiting for them—Hell—where they will be burned. What a wretched bed to lie on! Let them taste boiling water and icy fluid and other vile things. Their leaders will be told, "This group will be thrown head first into the fire with you. There is no welcome for them. They will burn in the fire!"

1183 One day at the Kabah the Meccans were discussing Mohammed and his enmity towards them, when Mohammed arrived. The Meccans insulted him. He said, "Listen to me, by Allah I will bring you slaughter." The Quraysh were stunned at his threat. They said, "Mohammed, you have never been a violent man, go away."

1184 The next day many of the Quraysh were at the Kabah when Mohammed arrived. They crowded around him and said, "Are you the one who condemned our gods and our religion?" Mohammed answered that he was the one. One of them grabbed him and Abu Bakr, Mohammed's chief follower, pressed forward and said, "Would you kill a man for saying that Allah is his Lord?" They let him go. Mecca was a small town and there were meetings about what to do about Mohammed.

43:79 Do they make plots against you? We also make plots. Do they think that We do not hear their secrets and their private conversations? We do, and Our messengers are there to record them.

He continued to speak of Allah and the Koran. Many times in the Koran, we find self-proofs of the validity of the Koran and the proof of Allah.

67:2 You can not see one defect in merciful Allah's creation. Do you see a crack in the sky? Look again and again. Your vision will blur from looking, but you will find no defects.

MORE ARGUMENTS WITH THE MECCANS

1188,189 Another group of Meccans sent for Mohammed to see if they could negotiate away this painful division of the tribes. They went over old ground and again Mohammed refused the money and power that was offered. He said they were the ones who needed to decide whether they wanted to suffer in the next world and he had the only solution. If they rejected him and his message, Allah would tend to them. One of the Quraysh said, "Well, this land is dry. Let his Allah send them a river next to Mecca. Have Allah move the mountains back from Mecca. Have Allah bring Qusayy, our best leader, back to life."

1189 Mohammed said that he was sent as a messenger, not to do such work. They could either accept his message or reject it and be subject to the loss. Then one of them said, "Send an angel to confirm you and prove to us that we are wrong. As long as the angel was present, let him make Mohammed a garden and fine home and present him with all the gold and silver he needed. If you do this, we will know that you represent Allah and we are wrong." The Quraysh wanted miracles as a proof.

15:4 *We never destroy a city whose term wasn't preordained. No nation can delay or change its destiny. They say: "You [Mohammed] to whom the message was revealed, you are surely insane. If you were telling the truth, why didn't you bring angels to us?"*

15:8 *We do not send the angels without good reason. If We did, the Kafirs would still not understand. Surely, We have sent down the message, and surely, We will guard it. Before your time, We sent apostles to the sects of the ancient peoples, but they mocked every messenger. Similarly, We allow doubt to enter the hearts of the sinners.*

1189 Mohammed did not do miracles, because such things were not what Allah had appointed him to do.

1189 Then one of the Quraysh said, "Then let the heavens be dropped on us in pieces as you say your Lord could do. Then if you do not we will not believe." Mohammed said that Allah could do that if Allah wished or he might not if he wished.

1189 They then said, "Did not your Lord know that we would ask you these questions? Then your Lord could have prepared you with better answers. And your Lord could have told you what to tell us if we don't believe. We hear that you are getting this Koran from a man named Al Rahman from another town. We don't believe in Al Rahman. Our conscience is clear. We must either destroy you or you must destroy us. Bring your angels and we will believe them."

1191 Mohammed would come to the Kabah and tell the Meccans what terrible punishments that Allah had delivered to the others in history who had not believed their prophets. That was now one of his constant themes. Allah destroyed others like the Meccans who did not listen to men like Mohammed.

A punishment story:

23:40 *Allah said, "In a short time they will quickly repent." Then the justice of the awful blast overtook them, and We turned them into so much rubbish swept away by a flood. So away with the wicked.*

23:42 *After them, We created other generations. No people may either hasten or delay their appointed time. Then We sent Our messengers one after another. Every time a messenger went forth to a nation, its people accused him of lying, so We caused them to follow one another into disaster, and We made them examples. So, away with the Kafirs.*

Moses:

79:20 *And Moses showed Pharaoh a great miracle. But Pharaoh denied it and disobeyed. Furthermore, he turned his back and rebelled against Allah. He gathered an army and made a proclamation, saying, "I am*

your lord, the most high.” So Allah punished him and made an example of him in this life and the hereafter. Surely this is a lesson for those who fear Allah.

A story about Abraham with Ishmael as the sacrifice:

37:102 When the son [Ishmael] grew tall enough to work, his father said to him, “Son, a dream tells me that I should sacrifice you. What do you think?” He said, “Father, do what you are commanded. If Allah wills, you will find me patient.”

1192 Since Mohammed and the Koran claimed Jewish roots, the Quraysh decided to send their story teller to the Jews in Medina and ask for help.

1192 The rabbis said, “Ask him these three questions. If he knows the answer then he is a prophet, if not then he is a fake.”

“What happened to the young men who disappeared in ancient days.”

“Ask him about the mighty traveler who reached the ends of the East and the West.”

“Ask him, What is the spirit?”

1192 Back in Mecca, they went to Mohammed and asked him the three questions. He said he would get back to them tomorrow. Days went by. Finally, fifteen days had passed. Mohammed waited on Gabriel for the answers. The Meccans began to talk. Mohammed did not know what to do. He had no answers. Finally, he had a vision of Gabriel.

19:64 The angels say, “We descend from heaven only by Allah’s command. Everything that is before us and everything that is behind us and whatever is in between belongs to Him. And Your Lord never forgets.

The Koran answered all the questions and statements of the Quraysh. With regards to the question about what happened to the young men in ancient times [this was a well know ancient tale], it says:

18:25 They remained in their cave for three hundred years, though some say three hundred and nine. Say: Allah knows exactly how long they stayed. He knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth. Man has no guardian besides Him. He does not allow any to share His power.

As to the question about the mighty traveler, Alexander the Great:

18:83 They will ask you about Zul-Qarnain [Alexander the Great]. Say: I will recite to you an account of him. We established his power in the land and gave him the means to achieve any of his aims. So he followed a path, until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it setting in a muddy pond. Near by he found a people. We said, “Zul-Qarnain, you have the authority to either punish them or to show them kindness.”

According to the Koran Alexander the Great was a prophet of Allah.

The question—what is the spirit?

17:85 *They will ask you about the spirit [probably the angel Gabriel].
Say: The spirit is commanded by my Lord, and you are given only a little
knowledge about it.*

After the Jewish leaders in Medina helped the Meccans with questions to ask Mohammed, the Koran has its first negative comments about the Jews.

5:64 *The Jews say, “The hand of Allah is chained up.” Their own hands
will be chained up [on the Last Day, the Jews would have their right
hand chained to their necks], and they will be cursed for what they say.*

ABROGATION

The change in the Koran about Jews was noticed. About this time the Meccans started pointing out to Mohammed that his Koran said one thing before and says something different later.

16:101 *When We exchange one verse for another, and Allah knows best
what He reveals, they say, “You are making this up.” Most of them do not
understand.*

2:106 *Whatever of Our revelations We repeal or cause to be forgotten, We
will replace with something superior or comparable. [There are as many
as 225 verses of the Koran that are altered by later verses. This is called
abrogation.]*

In general, abrogation means that a later verse nullifies or weakens an earlier contradictory verse. However, since both come from Allah they can both be used when needed. In truth, this leads to dualism—two contradictory ideas which are both true.

This is the Sunna of Mohammed

STRUGGLES

CHAPTER 4

8:20 Believers! Be obedient to Allah and His messenger, and do not turn your backs now that you know the truth. Do not be like the ones who say, "We hear," but do not obey.

SUMMARY

The Meccans began to resist Mohammed. Again and again the Koran condemned all those who resisted Islam to eternal torture in Hell.

More Meccans began to believe Mohammed. There was a larger gulf between Muslims and their old friends.

Mohammed had his most famous visions, the night journey to Paradise.

Mohammed's uncle and wife died. Mohammed soon had a new bride.

1235 A Meccan met Mohammed and said, "Mohammed, you stop cursing our gods or we will start cursing your Allah." So Mohammed stopped cursing the Meccan gods. An ongoing theme of Mohammed's was of ancient civilizations who did not listen to their prophets and the terrible downfall of that country.

11:59 The men of Ad [an ancient people of southern Arabia] rejected signs of their Lord, rebelled against His messengers, and followed the bidding of every proud, defiant person. They were cursed in this world, and on Resurrection Day it will be said to them, "Did Ad not reject their Lord?" The people of Ad were cast far away.

THE SATANIC VERSES

1239 Some Meccans approached Mohammed and said, "Let us worship what you worship. Then you worship what we worship. If what you worship is better than what we worship, then we will take a share of your worship. And if what we worship is better, then you can take a share of that."

T1192¹ Mohammed was always thinking of how he could persuade all the Meccans. It came to him that the three gods of the Quraysh could intercede with Allah. The Meccans were delighted and happy. When Mohammed lead prayers at the Kabah, all the Meccans, Muslim and Kafir, took part. The Quraysh hung about after the combined service and remarked how happy they were.

T1192 But it was Satan had made him say those terrible words about how the other gods could help Allah. The retraction by Mohammed made the relations between Islam and the Meccans far worse than it had ever been.

22:52 *Never have We sent a prophet or messenger before you whom Satan did not tempt with evil desires, but Allah will bring Satan's temptations to nothing. Allah will affirm His revelations, for He is knowing and wise. He makes Satan's suggestions a temptation for those whose hearts are diseased or for those whose hearts are hardened.*

HELL

The Koran's most descriptive language is reserved for Hell. Hell occupies a large part of the Koran, particularly the early Meccan Koran. There are 217 verses that directly refer to Hell.

22:19 *These two, the believers and the Kafirs, argue with each other about their Lord, but for the Kafirs, clothing of Fire has been made for them. Boiling water will be poured on their heads. It will scald their insides and their skin as well. They will be beaten with iron rods. Every time they, in their torment, attempt to escape from the Fire, they will be dragged back into it, and they will be told, "Taste the torture of the burning."*

PREDESTINATION

Again and again the Koran proclaims the total control of Allah over the smallest action.

7:178,179 *Those whom Allah guides are on the right path; those whom He leaves in error are the losers. We have created many jinn and men to burn in Hell.*

However, some few verses imply free will. Dualism is one of the principles of the Koran.

18:29 *Say: the truth is from your Lord; whoever wills may believe, and whoever wills may disbelieve.*

1. The T references are to Al Tabari's *History of Prophets and Kings*